

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 14, 2016

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 31, 2016

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 28, 2016

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2015–16 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2099

Introduced by Assembly Member Mark Stone

February 17, 2016

An act to add and repeal Chapter 16 (commencing with Section 18997) of Part 6 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2099, as amended, Mark Stone. Safe drinking water benefit.

Existing law provides for financial and food assistance benefits to needy Californians, including, among other programs, the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program and CalFresh, under which each county provides for financial and food assistance benefits to qualified individuals who meet specified eligibility criteria. Existing law, administered by the State Department of Social Services, provides for the establishment of a statewide electronic benefits transfer (EBT) system for the purpose of providing those financial and food assistance benefits. Existing law authorizes a county to deliver CalFresh benefits and, upon election by the county, CalWORKs benefits through the use of an EBT system.

This bill would require the State Department of Social Services to, on or before February 1, 2017, convene a workgroup to develop recommendations for delivering a water benefit to supplement the purchase of drinking water for low-income households with inadequate

access to safe drinking water, as specified. The bill would require the workgroup to consist of representatives from specified entities, including the Department of Water Resources, the Office of Emergency Services, and applicable community advocates, and would require the workgroup to develop recommendations that include, among other things, an implementation plan for identification of eligible households and delivery of the benefit to those households. The bill would require the State Department of Social Services to, on or before July 1, 2017, submit a report with the recommendations to the Legislature and the California Health and Human Services Agency. The bill would also make relating findings and declarations.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
- 2 following:
- 3 (a) The electronic benefits transfer (EBT) system has operated
- 4 statewide in California since 2004 as an effective and efficient
- 5 method to issue government benefits to recipients.
- 6 (b) Research has shown that the use of EBT has many
- 7 advantages for delivering public benefits. For recipients, EBT
- 8 offers greater convenience, improved security, and reduced
- 9 stigmatization. For state governments, EBT provides cost and time
- 10 savings, improves operational efficiencies, and promotes
- 11 accountability while stimulating local economies.
- 12 (c) EBT has been deemed an effective and responsive
- 13 mechanism for quickly delivering assistance to people recovering
- 14 from natural disasters.
- 15 (d) The Legislature and the Governor established The Human
- 16 Right to Water ~~policy~~ in 2013, which established the policy of the
- 17 state that every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable,
- 18 and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking,
- 19 and sanitary purposes.
- 20 (e) Despite a history of proactive water policies, California
- 21 residents still face formidable challenges as the drought continues
- 22 to exacerbate water quality issues for disadvantaged communities
- 23 who disproportionately bear the health and financial impacts of
- 24 inadequate access to safe water.

1 (f) Significant barriers to water access exist for marginalized
2 Californians who are forced to choose between drinking water and
3 expending scarce resources to pay for clean water.

4 (g) In 2014, more than 1 million Californians faced water safety
5 violations that made water unsafe to drink.

6 (h) As the drought enters its fifth year, more than 2,000 domestic
7 wells have gone dry in the Central Valley, affecting tens of
8 thousands of people. Many small communities face chronic water
9 quality problems. Almost 400 small rural water systems and
10 schools are unable to provide safe drinking water.

11 (i) In response to these challenges, the Governor and the
12 Legislature have established or proposed new emergency drinking
13 water supports to assist these households.

14 (j) Recognizing this, it is the intent of the Legislature to utilize
15 the existing EBT system to deliver appropriate emergency water
16 benefits to disadvantaged households in an efficient and effective
17 manner.

18 SEC. 2. Chapter 16 (commencing with Section 18997) is added
19 to Part 6 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, to
20 read:

21
22 CHAPTER 16. SAFE DRINKING WATER BENEFIT
23

24 18997. (a) On or before February 1, 2017, the State Department
25 of Social Services shall convene a workgroup to develop
26 recommendations for delivering a water benefit to supplement the
27 purchase of drinking water for low-income households with
28 inadequate access to safe drinking water.

29 (b) The water benefit to be developed shall do all of the
30 following:

31 (1) Be made available to low-income households with
32 inadequate access to safe drinking water, including, but not limited
33 to all of the following: water.

34 ~~(A) Households served by noncompliant small water systems~~
35 ~~in disadvantaged communities, as defined in Section 79505.5 of~~
36 ~~the Water Code.~~

37 ~~(B) Households located in communities deemed eligible for~~
38 ~~interim emergency drinking water benefits by the State Water~~
39 ~~Resources Control Board.~~

1 ~~(C) Households whose private wells have active outages or~~
2 ~~water supply problems, as determined by the Department of Water~~
3 ~~Resources.~~

4 (2) To the extent possible, be provided through the electronic
5 benefits transfer system.

6 (3) To the extent possible, be funded from existing emergency
7 drought response resources allocated for interim water assistance.

8 (c) The workgroup shall consist of representatives from all of
9 the following entities:

- 10 (1) The State Department of Social Services.
- 11 (2) The State Water Resources Control Board.
- 12 (3) The Department of Water Resources.
- 13 (4) The Office of Emergency Services.
- 14 (5) The County Welfare Directors Association of California.
- 15 (6) Food policy advocates.
- 16 (7) Other applicable community advocates.

17 (d) The workgroup shall develop recommendations that include
18 all of the following:

- 19 (1) The design of the benefit.
- 20 (2) An implementation plan for identification of eligible
21 households and delivery of the benefit to those households. *In*
22 *developing eligibility criteria, the workgroup shall consider all of*
23 *the following populations:*

24 *(A) Households in disadvantaged communities served by*
25 *noncompliant small community water systems, as defined in Section*
26 *116275 of the Health and Safety Code.*

27 *(B) Households located in communities deemed eligible for*
28 *interim emergency drinking water benefits by the State Water*
29 *Resources Control Board.*

30 *(C) Households whose private wells have active outages or*
31 *water supply problems.*

32 (3) Possibilities for interim or permanent adoption and
33 implementation of the benefit through regulations, all-county
34 letters, or similar instruction.

35 (e) (1) The State Department of Social Services shall submit a
36 report with the recommendations to the Legislature and the
37 California Health and Human Services Agency by July 1, 2017.

38 (2) A report to be submitted to the Legislature pursuant to
39 paragraph (1) shall be submitted in compliance with Section 9795
40 of the Government Code.

1 18998. This chapter shall become inoperative on July 1, 2021,
2 and, as of January 1, 2022, is repealed, unless a later enacted
3 statute, that becomes operative on or before January 1, 2022,
4 deletes or extends the dates on which it becomes inoperative and
5 is repealed.

O